



For immediate release

Ceremony Honors Graduates of Offender Workforce Development Specialist Training Program

New Castle, Indiana (June 11, 2013) – Thirty one individuals involved in the delivery of reentry services to offenders in Indiana were recognized for achieving certification through the National Institute of Corrections as Offender Workforce Development Specialists (OWDS). The ceremony was held on June 7, 2013 at the Indiana Department of Correction's (IDOC) Correctional Training Institute in New Castle, Indiana.

The participants, selected through a statewide application process, represent a diverse array of agencies, including the IDOC, Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Work One, community nonprofit and faith based organizations, Community Corrections and the GEO Group. All of these agencies are involved in helping offenders secure employment and make a successful transition from prison to the community. At the completion of Friday's ceremony, Indiana will have grown from one OWDS in April 2009 to a total of 101 OWDS in just four years.

For many years, it has been widely known the important role employment plays in the transition from prison to the community. This rigorous training provides corrections staff and community partners with the professional skills needed to help offenders secure and maintain meaningful employment. It also promotes the coordination of services between agencies which is an essential component of Indiana's reentry efforts.

The OWDS Training program was developed by the National Institute of Corrections in partnership with the National Career Development Association. The training provides participants with the professional skills needed to assist offenders with career planning, job placement, job retention, and career advancement. The Indiana Department of Correction, through PEN Products, their correctional industries job training program, provides this 180 hour accredited training program twice annually.

"The program works to establish partnerships where none may have existed before," reports John Rakis, a consultant for the Transition and Offender Workforce Development Division of the National Institute of Corrections. "It is designed to promote a seamless continuum of expert workforce development services from the correctional facility to the community and is central to the Institute's commitment to encourage the use of evidenced-based practices".

"Offender Workforce Development Specialist Training has provided this group of participants a rare opportunity to step outside of their everyday jobs and learn new and effective skills," said PEN Products Job Placement/Operations Manager Doug Evans, state program manager for the OWDS project.

"Additionally, it has opened the door for collaborations between agencies and individual practitioners

across Indiana. We are excited to honor this diverse group of individuals and congratulate them for this significant accomplishment.”

The National Institute of Corrections, an agency within the U.S. Department of Justice, was created in 1974 as a resource for practitioners in the Corrections field and to provide leadership and assistance to the field. Additional information about the agency and its initiatives can be found at www.nicic.gov.

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